



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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MEDIA NOTE

20th Anniversary of the Treaty on Open Skies

On March 24, the U.S. Department of State commemorates the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on Open Skies, and the role it has played in providing peace and stability for Euro-Atlantic relations. In 1992, the Treaty was signed in Helsinki, Finland during a Summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

The United States was among 27 signatory nations for the conventional arms control Treaty, which was designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants a direct role in gathering information about military forces and activities. The Treaty enhances transparency by affording each State Party the opportunity to overfly the territory of other States Parties using sensor-equipped observation aircraft. The observation flights provide a platform for confidence and security-building that reduces the probability of misunderstanding and regional tensions.

The Treaty's current 34 member states have successfully conducted more than 835 observation flights over each other's territory. The concept of "mutual aerial observation" was initially proposed by President Eisenhower in 1955 as a bilateral arrangement with the Soviet Union to ensure that neither side was engaged in offensive preparations or destabilizing measures. In 1989, President H.W. Bush re-introduced the concept as a multilateral agreement among those states that were then NATO Allies and the former Warsaw Pact members.

Stretching from Vancouver in the west to Vladivostok in the east, this landmark agreement is one of the most wide-ranging international arms control efforts to date and provides a key mechanism in support of U.S. Euro-Atlantic security objectives.

The United States remains committed to maintaining the viability of the Treaty by enhancing transparency, employing new imaging technologies, and strengthening international cooperation through the effective and efficient implementation of the Treaty's confidence building measures. In this regard, the Open Skies Treaty continues to be one of the most successful and valuable arms control regimes.

For more information on the Treaty on Open Skies www.state.gov/t/avc/cca/os

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